1 November 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: Executive Director-Comptroller

SUBJECT   :   Personnel Development Program

General

    1.   The Management Advisory Group views the Personnel Development Program memorandum submitted by the Office of Personnel as an excellent first step in a long, overdue systematic approach to executive and personnel development. The Program is extremely ambitious but is vitally important to developing personnel to meet the future needs of the Agency. The plan, for the first time, will force management to make projections regarding headroom, will require components to program personnel to move upward to fill vacancies, and should ensure that the personnel have been adequately prepared so that they will be ready to move into the increasingly responsible positions.

    2.   This plan, or any similar plan, will undoubtedly have many "bugs," but these will best be handled as they arise since it is impossible to see them all now. To ensure that they are so identified and that action is taken to correct them, it is imperative that the Program retain considerable flexibility for future amendment. It is even more important, if the Program is to be more than a show piece for the Civil Service Commission, that top level management make clear its commitment to the Program, and that this commitment be sustained over time.

Probable Effectiveness

    3.   Given the full support of upper level management, there does not appear to be any reason to doubt that the Personnel Development Program should be reasonably effective. At a minimum, the Program has the merit of instituting a systematic process through which promising officers can be identified and, hopefully, better prepared for their prospective upward movement within the Agency. The major advantage of this

approach is the establishment of procedures to replace what is now largely an _ad hoc_ process. In short, the Program forces present management to consider more formally the very important question of an individual's -- and by extension, the Agency's -- future development.

4. The effectiveness of the Program will be enhanced by the development of a mechanism of impartial review and evaluation of personnel designed to reduce the effect of personalities on the advancement ladder. A panel system, such as the Clandestine Services', should ensure that personnel are selected because of merit and potential rather than by being a member of an "old boys' club." Each component or office will, of course, have to develop its own method of selection but efforts must be made to ensure that the cry of "cronyism" cannot be attached to the process.

5. While the overall reaction to the Program is favorable, it may have certain built-in problems, some of them stemming from the early identification of "comers." The danger of "elitism" exists along with its potential effect on overall Agency morale. The existence of such "comer" rosters could not be kept secret and there could be the problem of how those not on the list reacted. Favoritism and arbitrariness are charges that could arise due to the Program. This possible drawback should be attenuated, but perhaps not removed, by the issuance of explanations about the Program and its purpose as required by the memorandum.

6. A related problem might be described as the "self-fulfilling prophecy dilemma." That is, once management has gone on record as tapping an individual as a "comer," there could arise a tendency to push that person along regardless of his or her actual performance. Otherwise, it might reflect "badly" on someone's initial choice. There is no iron-clad way around this potential problem except to be aware that it exists. Some sort of continuing review will aid in keeping excesses of this type to a minimum.

Probable Acceptance

7. As is the case with any major change, it is assumed that there will be some initial resistance to the acceptance of such a wide ranging revision in the system of vertical movement within the Agency. To be really effective, the Program must have the strongest support possible from the highest levels of the Agency so that there is no question as to the need for all to accept the Program and to work for its proper implementation. When the Program is fully explained and its

benefits to the individual, management, and the Agency are made clear, the chances of the Program being completely accepted seem promising.

8. Some managers will, however, doubtless see the Program as infringing on their individual perogative. Thus, there might be the tendency in some quarters to make a "best effort" approach without any real commitment to the purpose of the Program. This can only be avoided by continuing pressure by top management to see that the Program is implemented in good faith. Flexibility within the Program should also serve to enhance its acceptability. Lower level acceptance of the Program would rest largely on how it is presented and implemented. The nature and purpose should be made clear to lower level officers. Otherwise, misapprehension and suspicion will tend to surface.

Reasonableness of the Effort

9. The effort which will be required to organize and manage such a Program would appear, on the surface, to be monumental. In practice, however, throughout the components there are various official or ad hoc mechanisms in existence which serve to select "comers" and/or plan for personnel development. Many of these systems probably can be converted for use in the Program. A great deal of work will be required initially but once the Program is in operation, its maintenance should be easily manageable. Although the Program creates more bureaucratic paper work, career development and the identification and training of promising individuals are the life blood of the Agency's future. To make these tasks more systematic and coherent is worth additional effort. It is ironic that this effort comes so late in the Agency's development.

Individual Comments

10. While the Program is described as one for personnel development, the memorandum appears to be devoted almost entirely to executive development. It is unclear whether the many Agency employees who do not possess executive potential but are excellent officers who need to develop other strengths will be included in the Program. Their career development requires augmentation by specialized training or assignments to better prepare them to perform their important but non-managerial tasks. Additionally, the proposed Program does not take into account employees until they have reached the GS-11 level. For many employees, this is too far along in their career to be very effective.

11. Personnel planning of the magnitude suggested by the Program requires much tighter controls over retirement. During

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the Youth Survey last spring, many young professionals argued that supervisors were not giving more responsibility or encouragement to "comers" because this might hasten their own retirement. "Prolong one's career by becoming indispensable!" The suggestion was made that a stricter age/service retirement program might encourage officers to train comers as their "proteges."

12. In some people's minds, the two-headed retirement program of the Agency hampers personnel planning. Declining overseas slots impedes those shooting for the more attractive Agency plan in preparing for their own retirement. At the same time, sympathetic managers may opt for the man needing one more tour over the man with superior skills in filling overseas slots. Thus again the "comer" is thwarted.

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13. Accurate or not, many young professionals speak of "cronyism" keeping capable people from advancing. A very bright young ███████████████████████████████████████ background has stated that he was very much impressed with those at his level, but equally distressed with the substantive knowledge and managerial skills of those above him. He blamed this on what he perceived as an "old boys' club" atmosphere allowing division chiefs to bring in outsiders to senior management slots regardless of their qualifications.

14. The proposed Program appears to be really two ambitious programs in one: an executive development program and an executive replacement program. The distinction between these two is that an executive development program would be for CIA employees, whereas an executive replacement program should be of wider scope. An "Executive Candidates Roster" should include non-Agency and non-Government personnel. Not only is this desirable to prevent inbreeding, but it is representative of the current status in DD/S&T where the Deputy Director and the majority of the office directors had substantial careers prior to Agency employment.

15. The Program appears to reflect a 9-1 approach that would be improved with provision for more input from the individuals who comprise the rosters, at whatever grade level. A modification to PMMP Forms 2, 4, and 5 that would include an employee's plan for himself, such as a rotational assignment outside his immediate parent organization, a sabbatical year, specific courses, etc., would ameliorate this problem. Lacking this, there may be too strong a tendency for managers to

perpetuate their own images -- and to impose their own preju-
dices -- in a manner that will in the long run tend to defeat
the admirable goals of the whole Program.

Management Advisory Group

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